PRINCE BULOW AND HIS MEMOIRS

Even the vast literature on the origins of the first world war Prince Billow's Memoirs hold a place apart. Most of the statesmen who occupied themselves with foreign affairs in the kst decade of peace have told their tale, but none of them has covered so much ground. Grey's survey of the crowded years before the catastrophe fills a single volume of moderate size. Iswolsky died at the age of sixty-three, when his narrative had only reached tiis appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1906, Bethmann's pathetic apologia begins in 1909, that of Sazonoff in 1910, that of Poincare in 1912. Berchtold's elaborate presentation, though far advanced, is not yet available. Billow's narrative, on the other hand, composed at leisure during the decade which followed the defeat of the Central-Powers, fills four volumes, the first two, dealing with the years 1897-1909, when he was mainly responsible for German foreign policy, the third continuing the story till 1919, and a fourth recording the experiences of his early diplomatic career.

The ex-Chancellor resisted all appeals to allow publication during his life, and his readers benefit by a decision which enabled him to write with complete freedom of his master, his friends, and his foes. Like other statesmen who held high office in the kst anxious period of peace, he has been as bitterly attacked by his own countrymen as by critics beyond the frontier. In his *Imperial Germany,* published in 1913 and partially rewritten in 1916, he adroitly defended his handiwork; but that remarkable book was written to form part of a vast co-operative glorification of German achievement during the

first twenty-five years of the reign of William n, in which there was no place for criticism. Though he had lost his post and his master's favour, he was not wholly free ; for Kiderlen had regained his footing after a decade of disgrace, and Biilow would have been more than human if he had burned his boats. But with the Kaiser in exile, Germany a Republic, and the leading figures of the Imperial regime dead or in retirement, there was nothing to prevent him from saying exactly what he thought. Like Poincard he fights with the gloves off, .hitting out sharply and sometimes savagely at men who put obstacles